

John 18

- We continue with the arrest of Jesus in the Garden followed by His trial
 - Last week we stopped just as the Romans came to arrest Jesus
 - John described the entire scene to emphasize Jesus' ultimate authority and control over the circumstances
 - Even as Jesus declared His identity, His voice caused the entire contingent of soldiers to fall backward
 - So let's pick up where we left off

[John 18:7](#) Therefore He again asked them, "Whom do you seek?" And they said, "Jesus the Nazarene."

[John 18:8](#) Jesus answered, "I told you that I am He; so if you seek Me, let these go their way,"

[John 18:9](#) to fulfill the word which He spoke, "Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one."

[John 18:10](#) Simon Peter then, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave's name was Malchus.

[John 18:11](#) So Jesus said to Peter, "Put the sword into the sheath; the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?"

- After knocking the soldiers to the ground, Jesus calmly asks again what do they want from Him
 - They answer, and then Jesus pointedly answers that since they want Him alone, they should not take the other disciples
 - His request makes perfect sense
 - First, this entire moment has been orchestrated by God for the sake of His Son's sacrifice, not to endanger the disciples
 - Secondly, Jesus Himself has told His disciples they will be left behind to conduct ministry in Jesus' absence
 - Finally, Jesus quotes Himself from John 6 where He said that of those the Father gives Him, He will not lose any
 - This quote presents a small dilemma

- John seems to imply that when Jesus said He wouldn't lose any sheep in John 6, He was speaking of the moment of Jesus' capture
- But this moment can't be the extent of Jesus' point in John 6
- In John 6, Jesus said:

John 6:39 "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day."

- Notice Jesus spoke of raising up those given to Him by the Father "on the last day"
 - The last day refers to the last day of the church age, when all saints will be resurrected into new bodies as Paul describes in 1 Cor 15
 - But the term raising up implies a laying down
 - In other words, resurrection requires a death, and so Jesus wasn't promising that none of His disciples would come to harm
 - He was promising that in the end all will enter the glory of the Kingdom
- But now in chapter 18 John says that Jesus' promise was fulfilled in this moment
 - How do we resolve this question? The answer is deceptively simple
 - John isn't saying that this moment was the final fulfillment of Jesus' comment
 - Notice John only quotes the first part of Jesus' words
 - Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one
 - But John left off the part about raising up on the last day
- John is simply showing that when Jesus promised He wouldn't lose any of His disciples, He was testifying to His commitment to watch over His sheep at all times
 - A shepherd's job was to maintain careful watch over the flock at all times

- The ultimate measure of His success is that all of the flock return to the fold
- But even before that point, the Lord will work for our behalf and grant us protection as needed to ensure we accomplish His purposes
- As Paul says so eloquently

[Rom. 8:28](#) And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

- In this moment, Jesus was at work to turn a very bad situation to good for those who loved Him
- Impulsive Peter was not content to rest in Jesus' words, so he takes matters into his own hands
 - He withdraws a dagger, and in a sudden, aimless thrust, he manages to injure a slave of the High Priest
 - It's interesting that John names Peter as the instigator
 - All four Gospels mention this moment, but only John names Peter
 - As we reflect on John's Gospel, we find John calling out Peter time and time again, in ways the other writers overlooked
 - It seems John wanted to put Peter in a more human position
 - Perhaps he was working against false teaching that wanted to elevate Peter to unrealistic importance
 - And what do we make of Peter's actions?
 - First, he was violating the accepted Jewish rules of the day
 - It was considered unlawful to carry a weapon on a feast day
 - And the result is nothing less than pathetic
 - He injures a slave in a non-lethal way
 - What exactly was he expecting to do against a cohort of soldiers?

- Assuming Peter wasn't a fool, we must conclude he was trying to start a melee
 - He cuts an ear, the Roman soldiers respond by drawing weapons
 - Chaos ensues, and Jesus escapes in the confusion
 - Perhaps that's what Peter thought
- Regardless, Peter's actions reflect an immature perspective and ignorance of what is happening around him
 - Jesus corrects Peter reminding him that the process that's underway is according to the Father's will
 - Peter is literally fighting the Father, not men
 - The other Gospels record that Jesus responds by healing the slave in the moment, a final miraculous healing of His earthly ministry
 - Jesus' love for this man is evident in that Jesus didn't want the impact of His ministry to result in unfair injury
 - Had Jesus not healed the man, Jesus would have been liable for the actions of His disciples
 - By healing the man, Jesus remains without guilt

John 18:12 So the Roman cohort and the commander and the officers of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him,

John 18:13 and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiaphas, who was high priest that year.

John 18:14 Now Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it was expedient for one man to die on behalf of the people.

John 18:15 Simon Peter was following Jesus, and so was another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and entered with Jesus into the court of the high priest,

John 18:16 but Peter was standing at the door outside. So the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to the doorkeeper, and brought Peter in.

John 18:17 Then the slave-girl who kept the door said to Peter, "You are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" He said, "I am not."

John 18:18 Now the slaves and the officers were standing there, having made a charcoal fire, for it was cold and they were warming themselves; and Peter was also with them, standing and warming himself.

- So the arrest proceeds, and Jesus is led bound to the high priest of Israel for a Jewish trial
 - The rule of law in Israel was a two part system under Roman authority
 - By Roman concession, the Jews were subject to their Jewish law and Jewish authorities
 - And then, all Jews were subject to Romans law and Roman authorities
 - If a Jew was accused of violating Jewish law, then they were to be persecuted by Jewish authorities
 - If a Jew was accused of violating Roman law, then they were subject to the Roman system
 - Only the Roman system had the right of the sword, that is the right to condemn a person to death
 - Though Jews still took liberty to stone a criminal from time to time when they could get away with it
 - In this case, the charge brought against Jesus was of violating the Jewish law, so the Roman cohort is acting on behalf of the Jewish authorities when they arrest Jesus
 - They deliver Him to the Jewish authorities for trial
 - Making the situation more confusing still, there are two Jewish authorities in this day...two high priests
- The legitimate high priest was Annas
 - He was the high priest the Jewish people recognized as the true high priest
 - He had been deposed by the Romans for failing to concede to Roman authority
 - In his place, the Romans placed first his five sons, one after another in the office
 - All his sons refused to concede to Romans demands, so each was deposed in turn
 - Finally, Annas' son-in-law, Caiaphas as given the role

- Caiaphas seemed to have been open to Roman oversight, since he held the position for several decades
- It was Caiaphas who prophetically declared that Jesus needed to die for the sake of the Jewish nation, not realizing the full meaning of his words
- Since the Romans ruled the land, the people of Israel had no choice but to accept the Romans' choice of high priest
 - But the people still recognized Annas as the rightful high priest, since the Law of Moses states that a high priest serves for life
 - Therefore, when it came time to try Jesus, they give Annas the first opportunity to pass judgment upon Jesus
- Only John records the details of Annas' trial
 - On the other hand, John gives no attention to the trial before Caiaphas
 - Nor does John address the subsequent trial in front of the Jewish ruling council, called the Sanhedrin
- Instead, John focuses entirely on Annas and then jumps to the trial of Pilate
 - Since the Jews were accusing Jesus of a crime worthy of death, the final judgment must come from Pilate
 - The Jews couldn't execute Jesus without Roman approval
 - So the trial before Pilate was necessary if the Jewish leaders were to get their way in putting Jesus to death
- As Jesus is sent to Annas' house, Peter followed Jesus at a distance
 - Naturally, he's curious what will happen to Jesus
 - But Peter is also worried
 - He knows that if His rabbi is arrested by the Jewish authorities, then Jesus' disciples would be next on the list
 - So he attempts to blend into the crowd
 - Another disciple was more bold than Peter, willing to enter the High Priest's home to observe the proceedings

- Most believe this disciple was John, since he often refers to himself in the third person and without name
- Furthermore, John's mother was Salome, who was a sister of Mary the mother of Jesus
- So John was both a cousin of Jesus and a nephew of Zechariah and Elizabeth, the parents of John the Baptist
- Zechariah was a priest who served in the temple, so it's not impossible for John to have had a relationship with Annas, as v. 15 says
- But John's focus is on Peter's denials
 - John record this scene in a similar manner to the other Gospels, alternating between Jesus and Peter
 - The contrast is between Jesus speaking truth knowing it will result in the loss of His earthly life
 - While Peter lies to protect his earthly life
 - R.E. Brown noted that as Jesus stands up to His interrogators and denies nothing...
 - Peter cowers before his interrogators and denies everything
 - John eventually gets permission to bring Peter into the courtyard of the house
 - And as Peter passes through the door, a slave girl asks Peter if he was not one of Jesus' disciples
 - Giving Peter the opportunity to make the first of his three denials, as Jesus predicted
 - John adds in v.19 that the officers of the temple were standing there at the time warming themselves by a charcoal fire and Peter was with them
 - John describes Peter as standing with Jesus' enemies
 - A charcoal fire wouldn't have put out a lot of heat, so it would have required that all these stand close together
 - We can assume that Peter wouldn't have cared what a slave girl thought

- But he would have worried what the officers thought
- And given the close quarters, Peter knew they could overhear the conversation
- Peter feared men more than he feared God

[John 18:19](#) The high priest then questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching.

[John 18:20](#) Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret.

[John 18:21](#) "Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I spoke to them; they know what I said."

[John 18:22](#) When He had said this, one of the officers standing nearby struck Jesus, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?"

[John 18:23](#) Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?"

[John 18:24](#) So Annas sent Him bound to Caiaphas the high priest.

- All of Jesus' trials were little more than kangaroo courts
 - There were many, many violations of Jewish law committed by the Jewish authorities in the conduct of these trials
 - Basically, any rule they needed to ignore or bypass, they did in order to arrive at the verdict they desired
 - The entire proceedings were contrived to arrive at a certain conviction
 - Once again, Jesus is in control of these circumstances, and so they go forward despite the ridiculousness of the charges
 - When Annas asks Jesus what He's been teaching, Jesus responds by challenging Annas to explain why he would ask Jesus to repeat things said publicly
 - Jesus' point is that Annas is clearly on a fishing expedition
 - Annas knows what Jesus was teaching
 - He has asked Jesus to repeat Himself so that something in His words might be used against Him

- Furthermore, Jesus is challenging them on a point of Jewish law, since an accused was not permitted by Jewish law to testify against Himself
- So Jesus is pointing out Annas' violation of law in interrogating the accused
- Ironically, an officer strikes Jesus and accuses Him of speaking to the high priest with contempt
 - It's ironic because Annas is the one showing Jesus contempt
 - Furthermore, Jesus is the true High Priest of God
 - So this officer of the temple is striking the High Priest and rightful inhabitant of the temple
 - Even as he criticizes Jesus for showing disrespect
 - Notice that Jesus is not putting up a real fight at this point
 - Ignoring the fact that Jesus has the power to stop everything by His word, He's not even acting as a reasonable defendant
 - He's making no real effort to exonerate Himself
 - John is showing us that Jesus didn't have any desire to avoid the cross
 - On the contrary, Jesus will orchestrate events to ensure He lands on the cross as planned
- At this point, Annas sends Jesus to Caiaphas, who lived in another part of the same structure
 - And Jesus was suffering the beginning of His abuse, Peter is busy saving his own skin

John 18:25 Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. So they said to him, "You are not also one of His disciples, are you?" He denied it, and said, "I am not."

John 18:26 One of the slaves of the high priest, being a relative of the one whose ear Peter cut off, said, "Did I not see you in the garden with Him?"

John 18:27 Peter then denied it again, and immediately a rooster crowed.

- Peter is still warming himself, listening but not showing himself to be associated with Jesus

- One of those at the fire ask Peter if he was a disciple
- This is the second opportunity for Peter to deny Jesus' prophecy
- And of course, Peter can't do it, so he denies once again
- And then in rapid succession, another slave recognizes Peter from the garden and makes the third accusation
 - Peter then issues his final, damning denial
 - And the rooster crows
 - In the other Gospels we learn that Peter's third denial was his strongest
 - And it was one Jesus heard from the other room, for Jesus caught Peter's eye at that point
 - And Peter left in shame, realizing that Jesus' words had been true
- At this point, Jesus' time with Caiaphas ends, as Caiaphas settles on a trumped up charge upon which Jesus will be tried before the Sanhedrin
 - Skipping over Caiaphas' interrogation and the Jewish trial, John takes us directly to the trial of Pilate, the man with the authority to put Jesus to death
 - John also ignores the brief time Jesus spends before Herod
 - The focus for John is Pilate's dilemma in condemning an obviously innocent man
 - The Sanhedrin eventually arrived at a charge of blasphemy because Jesus claimed to be the son of God
 - The problem was Rome wouldn't authorize a death penalty for such a crime
 - So the Sanhedrin also charged Jesus with sedition against Rome
 - They take Jesus to the Praetorium, which is the Latin word for the headquarters of a Roman military governor
 - Pilate was the procurator of the Judean province of the Roman Empire
 - His normal headquarters was in Caesarea, but he always moved his headquarters to Jerusalem during the feasts fearing uprisings

- His headquarters was mostly like Herod's former palace along the Western Wall of the city
- It's here that Jesus is interrogated and presented before the crowds

[John 18:28](#) Then they led Jesus from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium so that they would not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.

[John 18:29](#) Therefore Pilate went out to them and said, "What accusation do you bring against this Man?"

[John 18:30](#) They answered and said to him, "If this Man were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him to you."

[John 18:31](#) So Pilate said to them, "Take Him yourselves, and judge Him according to your law." The Jews said to him, "We are not permitted to put anyone to death,"

[John 18:32](#) to fulfill the word of Jesus which He spoke, signifying by what kind of death He was about to die.

- Those who led Jesus here did not dare enter into the headquarters
 - Since this is the day of Passover, these Jewish authorities could not enter the place without being considered unclean
 - If they were declared unclean, they could not participate in the feast
 - This was not a specific requirement under the Law of Moses, but it had become the practice out of fear that a Gentile home might contain leaven, which wasn't permitted on this day
 - Again, here's another irony
 - They want to preserve their opportunity to participate in the Passover, a feast that pictures the sacrifice to take away sins
 - And all the while, they are conspiring to murder the Son of God, Who is preparing to die to take away sin
 - Notice also that they want to eat the Passover meal
 - This reminds us that the normal time for the Passover meal hasn't yet come
 - The normal time to eat the meal was before sundown after the lambs were sacrificed on the daytime of Passover

- This time has come yet, so they are working to remain ritually clean
- But this also confirms what we learned earlier, that the meal Jesus ate with the disciples was a meal outside the normal pattern for the Passover
- In fact, there would have been no literally lamb at their table, since none had yet been sacrificed
- At the Last Supper, as Jesus declared, He was the sacrifice at that table
- Because these men remain outside Pilate's home, it forces Pilate to shuttle between the priests and Jesus to conduct the trial
 - This back and forth becomes a powerful commentary on a man manipulated and vacillating between two powerful forces
 - Between evil and good
 - John's narrative diminishes Pilate in many ways, reflecting how little power this man truly had in the moment
 - He was beaten before he ever started
 - Pilate first asks these men what crime they are accusing Jesus of committing
 - They answer indignant that they must explain themselves to Pilate
 - They were probably expecting Pilate to rubber stamp their charges, after all he assigned a cohort to the arrest
 - When they realized he was going to retry Jesus, they withhold any further information fearing they couldn't prove it
 - So biding for time and hoping to sidestep a Roman trial, they tell Pilate if we didn't have a good reason to be here, we wouldn't be bothering you
 - Obviously, in this case it's an excuse for not having a legitimate accusation

- Pilate senses this and tells them to judge the man under their own law
 - But they object because they know they can't execute Jesus without running afoul of Roman law
 - So they reveal to Pilate that Jesus is accused of a capital offense
 - This would have surprised Pilate, leading him to take everything more seriously from this point forward
 - Also, John says the Jews' comment fulfilled the word of the Lord concerning the manner of Jesus' death
 - What John means is that Jesus wouldn't die according to any method approved by the Jewish Law
 - Jewish Law required death by stoning
 - But the Romans did not practice stoning as a method of execution
 - So when the Jews said we cannot kill Jesus, you must do it, they were unknowingly working to fulfill scripture
 - Specifically, Jesus Himself said He must be lifted up like the serpent as mentioned in John 3 & 12
 - And in Deut 21, God declared that anyone hung on a tree is deemed to be cursed of God, as Jesus was accused for our sake according to Isaiah
 - Third, death by crucifixion pulls the body out of joint while generally avoiding breaking bones, which fulfills Psalms 22 & 34
 - Fourth, it brings both Gentiles and Jews together in the act of putting Jesus to death, so all humanity is responsible for His suffering
- So then Pilate returns to ask Jesus what's this all about

[John 18:33](#) Therefore Pilate entered again into the Praetorium, and summoned Jesus and said to Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

[John 18:34](#) Jesus answered, "Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?"

[John 18:35](#) Pilate answered, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You to me; what have You done?"

[John 18:36](#) Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm."

- Pilate begins by asking Jesus if He is the King of the Jews
 - Though John doesn't record it, the Jewish authorities provided this accusation to Pilate according to Luke 23:2
 - They chose to put those words in Jesus' mouth as an expression of His claims to be the Christ
 - But of course, they have framed the issue as a threat to Roman rule hoping to convince Pilate to charge Jesus with sedition
 - So Pilate asks Jesus if He intends to be King?
 - In the other Gospels, Jesus is said to answer affirmatively
 - And John records that affirmative answer in v.37
 - But John also wants us to know that Jesus spoke a few more things as well
 - In His response, Jesus asks Pilate what led him to ask this question? Did he arrive at this conclusion on his own or was he told
 - Why does Jesus care?
 - Jesus wants to know if Pilate was asking of his own curiosity
 - Or was he merely looking to trap Jesus by His own words
- Jesus needs to know so He can adjust His response
 - Presumably, had Pilate indicated some sincere curiosity about Jesus, then Jesus would have responded openly as He did in other situations
 - On the other hand, if Pilate shows he's merely working to confirm the Jewish leaders' accusations, then Jesus would not condescend to play their game
 - In the other Gospels, we're told that Pilate must shuttle between Jesus and the religious leaders multiple times to hear a barrage of accusations
 - But in this moment, Jesus just wants to know where Pilate stands

- Pilate's response is sarcastic, asking Jesus if he's a Jew, meaning do I really care who you are?
 - Pilate's interest is simply for the sake of the proceedings
 - Therefore, he's not interested in whether Jesus is Messiah
 - Because it's apparent Pilate is not interested in the truth, Jesus attempts to reassure Pilate with His answer
- Jesus says that His kingdom is not the Roman Empire
 - Jesus is telling Pilate that He has nothing to worry about when it comes to the power of the Roman Empire
 - By the time Jesus enters into His kingdom, the Roman Empire of Pilate's day will be long gone from the earth
 - As will all Gentile kingdoms
 - For Jesus' kingdom is of another world, a world yet to come but one that will one day be present on the earth
- Remarkably, Jesus isn't finished with His earthly ministry of saving souls even at this late hour
 - Remember, He said He came not to judge but to save
 - And as long as He is alive on earth, Jesus will continue to leave the door open for men to come to Him
 - Even men who are set about to condemn Him
 - Furthermore, Jesus says His followers were not presently fighting those who held Jesus
 - If Jesus and His followers had intended to compete with Rome for power, then when Jesus was arrested, His followers would have taken up arms to defend their king
 - But they were not fighting to free Jesus and defeat Pilate
 - Which means Christ's Kingdom isn't being put at risk because Pilate's actions
- Jesus is presenting an important principle for all His followers
 - But we can't confuse who our enemy is with who we are fighting for

- Jesus' followers fight against the enemy and for the Kingdom
- The enemy of the Kingdom is Satan and His demons, as Paul explained

Eph. 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

- Ours is a spiritual battle, and so our tactics and weapons must be spiritual in nature
 - We fight through the sword of the spirit, through prayer and personal sacrifices
 - We understand that our enemy is strong but our King is stronger
 - So we enter the battle with confidence yet with wisdom
- The people we encounter who oppose Christ and His followers are *not* our enemies
 - We may contend with evil people at times, but we look past them individually
 - We understand they are pawns in a spiritual chess match
 - Such people are not our enemy; they are the reason we are fighting the battle
 - Humanity is our mission field, not our battlefield
- We must see unbelievers who oppose us as potential converts and treat them accordingly
 - That's why Jesus said we are to love those who persecute us
 - That is why Jesus responded gently to Pilate at first, seeking to know if He was open to the truth
 - Jesus was even now willing to look past the flesh to understand that the enemy is the real target
 - Later in chapter 19, Jesus will explain this truth to Pilate himself
- In this matter , there was nothing to be gained by Jesus or His followers resisting the will of the Jews or the Romans

- Spiritually speaking, these events were exactly as they should be to accomplish the will of God
- That's why Jesus explains that Pilate need not worry about Jesus' claims nor His followers

[John 18:37](#) Therefore Pilate said to Him, "So You are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."

[John 18:38](#) Pilate said to Him, "What is truth?" And when he had said this, he went out again to the Jews and said to them, "I find no guilt in Him.

[John 18:39](#) "But you have a custom that I release someone for you at the Passover; do you wish then that I release for you the King of the Jews?"

[John 18:40](#) So they cried out again, saying, "Not this Man, but Barabbas." Now Barabbas was a robber.

- Upon hearing Jesus refer to His Kingdom, Pilate says to Jesus, "So, you are a King?"
 - Pilate tries to trap Jesus into admitting something by which he could accuse Jesus
 - Jesus already denied being a threat to Pilate
 - But Pilate isn't convinced yet, so he's pressing Jesus for more
 - Jesus responds that Pilate has spoken correctly, and that Jesus' very life was intended to testify to the truth of His identity
 - To which Pilate famously and cynically replies, "What is truth?"
 - For a man who spent his life surrounded by politicians while judging cheats and criminals of various kinds, Pilate had no confidence in someone finding truth
 - His response is a mild mocking of Jesus, making Jesus out to be an idealist
 - And his perspective would have been correct had Jesus been just a man
 - But Jesus is the Truth, the One Who knows all things and is always true, in which there is no lie
 - But Pilate was a man who lived in the world, which belongs to the Father of Lies

- So after posing the question to Jesus, Pilate leaves before waiting for an answer
- Which is ironic, since Jesus is the one and only Person Who could have answered Pilate's question
- In the end, Pilate declares that Jesus is not guilty of anything, which is one of several such declarations
 - John greatly condenses this scene in his Gospel
 - In the other Gospels, we see multiple back-and-forth exchanges between Pilate and the Jewish leaders
 - More than once, Pilate tries to release Jesus but the Jewish leaders object intensely each time, demanding Jesus die
 - Their determination to see Jesus killed worries and confuses Pilate
 - He can't reconcile how Jesus could be so hated for seemingly no reason
 - Nevertheless, he begins to worry that releasing Jesus might cause bigger problems for him in Judea than if he killed an innocent man
- The scales begin to tip in favor of punishing Jesus once Pilate takes Jesus before the crowd
 - A crowd has gathered at Pilate's headquarters presumably to hear the result of Jesus' trial
 - Pilate thinks he can use this crowd to his advantage in settling the matter of Jesus
 - His plan is to take Jesus before the crowd and appeal to them on the basis of a recent tradition
 - Apparently, Rome would release one Jewish prisoner at Passover
 - This tradition is not mentioned in history outside the Gospel accounts but apparently this custom had developed around the time of Jesus
 - Pilate wants to use this tradition to bypass the pressure of the Jewish leaders and so he can take the temperature of the Jewish crowd
 - Pilate is worried about riots and unrest in Judea

- The Roman soldiers in Jerusalem are strong enough to put down any unrest in the end
- But Pilate can't afford any unrest
- Pilate came into his position of power because his predecessors couldn't keep peace in Judea and were removed from power as a result
 - The Caesar demands peace in Judea
 - So Pilate has strong incentive to avoid a riot at all costs
- So Pilate assumes that by bringing Jesus before the crowd in this way, he can orchestrate Jesus' release without risk of an angry mob
 - Pilate assumes that the people will want their "king" released
 - And if the crowd approves the release, who will be left to object?
- But Pilate makes a strategic blunder
 - In the other Gospels, we learn that the Jewish leaders have been secretly moving within the crowd influencing them against Jesus
 - By appealing to the crowd, Jesus is playing into the hands of the Jewish leaders
 - So when Pilate asks his fateful question, the crowd responds Barabbas, much to Pilate's horror
 - Interestingly, Pilate had chosen a well-known and little-loved mercenary, Barabbas as the alternative to Jesus
 - Again, he expected to make the crowd's choice easy and obvious
 - Barabbas seems to have been a career criminal
 - For example, John says Barabbas was a robber
 - Acts says he was a murderer
 - Luke says he led an insurrection against Roman authorities
 - Matthew says Barabbas was notorious, meaning everyone knew Barabbas was a troublemaker

- Nevertheless, the crowd chose Barabbas over Jesus, which was a strange choice to say the least
 - But the names of these two individuals reveals the true reason Barabbas is chosen
 - His name means son of Abba
 - Abba is the Aramaic word for father
 - So both Jesus and Barabbas are sons of their fathers
 - Jesus is the Son of the Perfect Father of Lights
 - He is a perfect representation of His perfection
 - And Jesus is the First Born among all the brethren
 - So that those who are born again by faith assume His likeness and eventually His perfection
 - And Jesus and His children will always be enemies of the world
 - Likewise, Barabbas is the son of his father, Satan
 - He is a perfect representation of Satan's and Adam's sinful nature brought into its fullness
 - He is a liar, thief, murderer, and usurper of thrones
 - He is poster child for all those who remain in their sins and are enemies of God
 - The choice before the crowd couldn't be more stark or representative of what was at stake in the moment
 - And as scripture teaches, the children of the bondwoman will always persecute the children of the free woman
 - Cain persecuted Abel
 - Ishmael persecuted Isaac
 - And Barabbas' people persecuted Christ
- The other Gospels tell us that Pilate put Jesus before the crowd twice in hopes they would choose Him over Barabbas, and both time the Crowd selected the wrong guy

- So at this point, Pilate resorts to one last ploy to gain Jesus some sympathy with the crowd
 - Jesus is scourged

[John 19:1](#) Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him.

[John 19:2](#) And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him;

[John 19:3](#) and they began to come up to Him and say, "Hail, King of the Jews!" and to give Him slaps in the face.

[John 19:4](#) Pilate came out again and said to them, "Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him."

[John 19:5](#) Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold, the Man!"

- John gives a single sentence to Jesus' scourging, but the punishment was especially cruel
 - To quote Arnold Fruchtenbaum:

The Roman custom of scourging was one of the cruelest forms of torture. Forty lashes were swung against the victim. The whip itself contained numerous leather straps, which had glass and pieces of sharp metal fixed at the end that would lacerate the flesh. The scourging was not limited to the back but was applied over the whole body. The flesh would be torn away and bone would be exposed. Quite often the prisoners died just from the scourging alone. Isaiah 52:14 prophesied the Messiah's scourging. The prophet stated that Messiah's person was so marred, so disfigured, that He no longer resembled a man!

- This was not intended to lead to the cross
 - This was done merely to bloody Christ to the point that when He would be re-presented to the crowd, they would grant Jesus mercy
 - To make Jesus look more pathetic, Pilate put a crown of thorns on Jesus and Herod's robe, which Jesus was given when Herod interrogated Him
- The crown of thorns is especially significant, because of its connection to the Garden of Eden
 - After the sin in the Garden, God pronounced a curse on all flesh and creation itself

- That curse included the decree that the earth would produce thorns and weeds, making life a hard endeavor
 - Men would live under that curse until the day the Messiah removed it
 - Here we see the Messiah bearing the curse for our sakes, as picture by Him bearing a crown of thorns on His head
 - Finally, Jesus is further mocked and slapped and beaten by the soldiers
- Then, Pilate brought Jesus out expecting to sock the crowd and calm their desire for blood
 - He says I have found this man guilty of nothing
 - Across all the trials and interrogations, this is the fourth time Jesus has been declared innocent
 - Finally, Pilate says, “Behold the man!”
 - The statement meant look at how pathetic this man is
 - While let’s the phrase stand as testimony to us of the extent God had to go in condemning sin and rescuing mankind